



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 20, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' PLOT;

OR, THE PLAN THAT WON.

By HARRY MOORE.

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CHAPTER I.

DICK IN DISGUISE.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of the twelfth day of December, of the year 1780.

Coming along a country road at a point a mile north of Camden, South Carolina, was a youth of apparently eighteen or nineteen years of age.

The youth in question was roughly dressed.

He wore an old, ragged suit of homespun.

On his feet was a pair of heavy, cowhide shoes, while on his head was an old, slouch hat.

There were numerous holes in the hat and here and there pieces were gone from the brim.

The youth was brown as a berry, and his hair was long and frowsy.

To the casual observer, the youth looked like a typical country boy.

The youth was a handsome young fellow, however, and a close observer looking into his intelligent face and keen, gray eyes would have said at once that this youth was no fool, and he would have been right.

No brighter, shrewder youth was there in all South Carolina than this one.

He was a youth, who, during the four years that had elapsed since the beginning of the Revolutionary War, had made himself famous.

From Massachusetts to Florida, this youth's name had long been coupled with deeds of daring and feats of bravery such as would be attempted by but few men.

The youthful pedestrian was Dick Slater, in disguise.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War Dick Slater had organized a company of youths of about his own age.

This company had been given the name of "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick Slater had been made captain of the company.

The "Liberty Boys" had made a wonderful reputation for themselves.

For reckless daring on the battlefield, for desperate determination to do or die, their equals could not be found in the entire patriot army.

If there was a desperate charge to be made, the "Liberty Boys" were always in the front ranks and woe to the red-coats who stood before them.

The "Liberty Boys" had turned the tide of more than one battle in favor of the patriots.

When they charged down the battlefield, cheering wildly and giving utterance to their battle cry of, "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" they usually carried everything before them.

And in addition to the reputation which Dick Slater had made as a brave and daring commander on the battlefield, he had earned a great reputation as a spy.

He had been called "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

Dick Slater was on a spying expedition now.

General Cornwallis and the British army were at Camden.

He had been there nearly a month, letting his troops rest after their victory over Gates and the patriot army at that place on the 16th of August.

The defeat of Gates had been total and ignominious.

The patriot army had been scattered and almost completely broken up.

Of course, this was only that portion of the patriot army that was in the South, known as the Southern Division.

On hearing of General Gates' defeat by Cornwallis, General Washington, commander-in-chief of the patriot army, had yielded to the importunities of Dick Slater and had given the youth permission to take his "Liberty Boys" and go down into South Carolina.

General Washington had given Dick orders to do all he could to assist General Gates in getting the army of the South together once more and reorganize it.

At the same time the youth was to worry and harass the British all that he possibly could.

The youths had mounted their horses and ridden southward as rapidly as possible.

They had made good time, and on the evening of the 11th of September, they had gone into camp on the banks of the Catawba River at a point about two miles north of Camden.

From a patriot, at whose house they had stopped to get something to eat, Dick had learned that Cornwallis and his army were at Camden.

"They've be'n thar nigh onto a month," the patriot farmer said.

"They've been there ever since the battle of Camden, eh?" remarked Dick.

"Yas; they seem ter have took er likin' ter ther place." Dick nodded.

He believed that he understood the matter.

The month of August is usually hot enough anywhere.

In South Carolina the heat during the past month had been something terrible.

Dick's idea was that Cornwallis was waiting for cooler weather before moving his army, in order to avoid losses from the ranks because of overheating and sunstroke.

In this he was right.

There were two or three things which Dick would wish to know, however.

He wished to know when the British intended to leave Camden.

Also, he wished to know where they intended going when they did leave.

There was only one way to find out.

That was by going into Camden and playing the part of a spy.

This would be an extremely dangerous thing to do.

Dick was known to Cornwallis and a number of his officers.

It would be like walking into the lion's den, to enter Camden.

Dick was determined to do it, however.

The fact that it was dangerous would not deter him.

Dick was far from being reckless, however.

With all his daring, he was always as cautious as it was possible to be.

He never took unnecessary risks.

He was determined to enter Camden, but he would go in disguise.

The trouble was, he had no disguise.

He did not know where he would find a disguise.

He puzzled over the problem for some time.

Then he suddenly remembered that he had seen a youth, of about his own age and size, back at the home of the patriot farmer where they had stopped to get supper.

"A suit of his clothes would just about fit me," thought Dick. "I have no doubt it will make a splendid disguise."

"Dressed in an old homespun suit, I do not think there will be much likelihood that Cornwallis or any of his men will recognize me."

"It is the best that I can do, anyway, and I will try it." Having so decided, Dick made his way to the home of the patriot and told them what he wished.

They were glad to accommodate him.

They gave him an old, ragged suit of homespun, a pair of old, cowhide shoes and an old, dilapidated slouch hat. These were just what Dick wanted.

He carried them back to camp, and, donning them, asked his comrades' opinions with regard to whether or not his appearance was changed sufficiently to prevent his being recognized.

"I don't believe they'll recognize you, Dick," said Bob Estabrook, Dick's nearest and dearest boy friend. "That old suit and hat makes lots of difference in your looks. Then, too, they won't be looking for you down in this part of the country and that will make lots of difference."

"That's the way I figure it, Bob; they would hardly believe it was me if they should meet me face to face, and I was not disguised at all."

"That's right; but say, Dick, I wish you had gotten two suits so that I could go along with you."

"I think I can do better alone, Bob."

Bob looked doubtful.

"Two could make a better fight than one, Dick," he said.

"True; but I don't intend to fight, not if I can help it."

"Maybe you won't be able to help it."

"In that case, two would practically be as helpless as one. No, Bob, it is in the guise of a fox, not a lion, that I am going. I shall exercise cunning, not force, and in such a case, I can do better work alone."

"Oh, all right; you know best," said Bob.

Dick was in no hurry, so he waited till nearly four o'clock before starting.

And now, at four o'clock, as stated in the beginning, we find Dick Slater disguised as a country youth walking along the road a mile north of Camden.

In his guise of a country youth, Dick did not dare carry any weapons.

Not wishing to feel entirely helpless, however, he had cut a goodly sized hickory stick before leaving camp, and this stick he carried with him now.

"A good, solid lick over the head with this stick would be apt to settle a fellow," thought Dick, with some satisfaction, as he made an imaginary swing in the air with the stick. "It is not such a bad weapon, after all."

Dick walked slowly onward, and as he walked along, he whistled a lively air.

Any one hearing him would have thought he was just what he purported to be—a light-hearted country boy without a care in the world.

This was what Dick desired, and as he approached Camden, he kept on whistling at a great rate.

"I suppose they'll have sentinels out," he thought; "and, if so, I'll be halted before I get into the town. If I can fool the sentinels and get into the town, I think I will be all right."

Dick walked steadily onward.

He kept on whistling merrily.

Suddenly Dick rounded a bend in the road and came in sight of Camden.

Indeed, the town was close at hand.

He was almost at its edge.

Suddenly two soldiers stepped out in the middle of the road and levelled muskets at Dick.

"Halt!" one cried. "You must give an account of yourself before you can pass here."

"I thought so," said Dick to himself; "there they are, sure enough. Now to see if I can fool them."

While thinking thus, Dick had continued advancing.

He had kept on whistling as well.

He had advanced perhaps five or six paces when the redcoat challenged him again.

"Halt!" the fellow cried, angrily. "What do you mean, anyway? Stop where you are or we will stop you with bullets!"

Dick stopped this time.

He stopped whistling, also, and gazed at the two redcoats with a well-simulated look of surprise on his face.

He looked the verdant country youth to the life.

"Hullo!" he said. "Did you uns speak ter me?"

"Of course I spoke to you!" cried the redcoat, in anger.

"Who else would I speak to?"

Dick elevated his eyebrows and shook his head.

"I dunno," he said. "Whut do you uns want with me?"

"We want to know who you are."

Dick simulated a look of surprise.

"Ye do?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"My name's Jim Simkins."

"Oh, it is?"

"Yas. Whut's your name, mister?"

Dick asked the question in the most matter-of-fact manner imaginable.

He played the part of a simple-minded country youth to perfection.

The redcoats were amused.

They laughed aloud.

"Say, you're a bright one, you are!" exclaimed the redcoat who had done most of the talking.

"Thet's whut ther school teacher allus said erbout me,"

said Dick, complacently. "Say, them air dinged purty suits ye fellers hev on. Whar did ye git 'em?"

The redcoats laughed again.

"They were given to us, Jim."

"They were gived ter ye?"

Dick looked surprised.

"Yes."

"Who gived 'em ter ye?"

"King George."

"King George?"

Dick looked puzzled.

"Yes," the redcoat said; "didn't you ever hear of him?"

Dick scratched his head and seemed to be studying.

"Kinder seems ter me like I hev," Dick said, deliberately. "He's one uv them air big French fellers, ain't he?"

The redcoats looked disgusted.

"French nothing!" the spokesman-redcoat cried. "There isn't anything French about King George. He's English."

"Oh, he is?"

"Yes; he's king of England."

Dick pretended to ponder a little while, scratched his head and then looked up at the sentinels.

"Say," he said, in the most innocent manner imaginable, "whur is Inglan'?"

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE ENCOUNTER.

The redcoats groaned in unison.

"Oh, Great Gulliver!" growled one. "Did you ever hear of such ignorance?"

"I never did," replied his comrade. "This young fellow is about the greenest specimen I ever saw."

"You're right; it's a wonder the cows haven't eaten him long ago."

Dick took advantage of the opportunity to come closer.

The redcoats had lowered their muskets, but now they raised them again.

"Stop!" cried one of the redcoats. "Stand where you are."

Dick stopped.

He didn't know but that the redcoats might take it into their heads to fire.

"Air you uns goin' ter tell me whur Inglan' is?" Dick asked.

"You wouldn't know after we told you," one of the fellows said, a contemptuous look on his face.

Dick looked at the speaker in mild surprise.

"Yo' think not?" he asked.

"I know it."

"How do yo' know et?"

"It's very simple. You haven't sense enough to understand."

Dick pretended to get angry.

"See here," he said; "do yo' mean ter say I hain't got no sense?"

"That's just what I mean to say."

Dick shook his stick, threateningly at the redcoats.

"I've er good mind ter give yer fellers er good thumpin'!" he declared, quite belligerently. "I've got ez much sense ez ye fellers."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yas."

"We don't think so, but I guess you've got sense enough to understand plain English, so I tell you to throw down that stick."

"Ye want me ter throw down this stick?"

"I command you to do so!"

"An' ef I don't drop ther stick, whut'll ye do?"

"We'll drop you!"

The redcoat's tone was fierce.

"Oh, ye'll drop me?"

"Yes."

"Then I guess I'll drop ther stick."

Dick let go of the stick as he spoke, and it fell to the ground.

"Thar!" the youth said, "I've dropped ther stick, an' now I'll tell ye whut, ef ye fellers'll drop yer old muskets an' give me half er chance, I'll take ye one at a time an' lick blazes out uv ye!"

Dick pretended to be very angry.

His air and words served to anger the redcoats.

They gave utterance to exclamations of rage.

That they should be talked to in this fashion, by a supposed green country youth whom they despised, and of whom they had been making sport, was extremely galling.

It happened that one of the sentinels was rather pugnistically inclined.

"Oh, say, Hank," he said, "this is too much! I'm going to give this young greenhorn a lesson."

"All right, Sam," said the other, "go ahead; you can do it, I guess."

"Well, now, you can just wager a year's pay that I can; I'll give him the worst thrashing he ever had in his life."

Dick heard this with secret satisfaction.

He did not wish to have to answer any more questions.

If he could change the discussion from words to fistcuffs he would not have to answer any more questions.

As the redcoat laid his musket on the ground and turned threateningly toward Dick, the youth asked, in the most innocent manner imaginable:

"Air ye goin' ter fight with me?"

"Am I going to fight with you?" sneered the redcoat. "No, I am going to give you a thrashing, that's all; it won't be a fight."

"Oh, et won't?"

"No."

"Then ye think I hain't enny good, do ye?"

"That is exactly what I think."

"An' ye think that wile yer givin' me ther thrashin' I won't be doin' ennything ertall, hey?"

"That's just what I think."

"Well, mister, ye'll fin' thet yer've been mistook."

"You think so?"

"Yas."

"What makes you think so?"

"Becos I'm jes' ther bes' little man thar is in this part uv ther kentry; I've licked all uv ther boys in our parts, an' I kin lick ye, by jinks!"

The redcoat laughed in a sneering manner.

"Say, this fellow needs a lesson pretty bad, Hank," he said.

"Yes, he's got the big head the worst way."

"He has for a fact."

"But I guess you can reduce the swelling somewhat, eh, Sam?"

"I can, and I am going to do it, too!"

Dick, who was close enough to hear this, said, drawlingly:

"Ye hedn't better be too sure uv thet; ye'll hev ter be er mighty good man ef ye lick me."

"He has good nerve, Sam," laughed the other redcoat.

"Yes, but I'll soon take that out of him."

This in a savage tone of voice.

"Mebby ye will an' mebby ye won't," said Dick.

Then he turned to the other redcoat.

"Say," he continued, "how do I know thet when I've licked yer pardner here, ye won't jab thet sharp thing on the end uv yer gun inter me?"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," said the redcoat; "there won't be any occasion for me to do that."

"No," growled the other, "there's no danger of his having to do that. It would take a dozen such fellows as you to thrash me."

"Well, I dunno erbout et," said Dick; "et won't do enny harm ter hev ther thing unnerstood afore we begin."

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I want ye ter prommus that ye won't jab me with that sharp-p'nted thing ef I do lick yer pardner."

"Oh, all right; I promise."

"We'll promise you more than that," said the other; "if you thrash me, we will let you go on your way unmolested."

"All right," said Dick; "et's er bargain."

"Look out for yourself, country!" said the redcoat, threateningly. "I'm going to go for you!"

"Just sail in!" invited Dick. "I'm ready fur ye."

The redcoat did sail in.

He thought, of course, that he would have an easy thing of it with Dick.

He supposed the youth was what he seemed to be, a verdant country boy.

The redcoat advanced upon Dick, striking out as he did so.

He had not thought that he would have any trouble striking the youth, but he soon found his mistake.

None of the blows which he aimed at Dick took effect.

Dick ducked and evaded the blows and warded them off with great skill.

As yet he did not attempt to strike his opponent.

The redcoats were amazed.

They were greatly surprised by the skill of the supposed country youth.

Dick enjoyed the situation.

He could not refrain from "rubbing it in" on the redcoat a bit.

"Why don't ye hit me?" he asked, tantalizingly; "I thort ye wuz goin' ter give me ther wurst thrashin' I ever hed."

A hoarse cry of rage escaped the redcoat.

To fail in his efforts to strike the supposed green country youth was bad enough, but to be made fun of was worse yet.

The redcoat set his teeth together grimly and redoubled his exertions.

He began trying to force matters.

He struck out wildly and fiercely and with great rapidity.

He did succeed in landing two or three blows, but they were comparatively light ones and for the most part glancing, and they did no damage.

The redcoat was now becoming very tired.

His breath was coming in short gasps.

"Curse you for a country jumping-jack!" cried the redcoat, angrily. "Why don't you stand up and fight like a man?"

The redcoat went down with a thump and a grunt.

"Oh, ye want me ter stan' up an' fight, do ye?" said Dick, quietly.

"Yes. You don't dare do it!"

"Oh, don't I?"

"No."

"I'll show ye."

As Dick spoke he paused and stood stock still. This movement rather took the redcoat by surprise. He was not expecting anything of the kind.

A moment later he was given a still greater surprise. Dick's right arm suddenly shot out.

His fist went straight to the mark.

It struck the redcoat squarely between the eyes.

Crack!

The blow was a strong one.

Dick had not put all his force into the blow, but it was hard enough to knock the redcoat down.

His comrade uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Great Gulliver!" he exclaimed. "That beats me."

"Et kinder beats yer pardner, too, I think," said Dick, calmly. "Didn't I tell ye I hed licked all ther boys in our part of ther kentry? Oh, I'm ther boss fighter, I am!"

The stricken redcoat who had been lying blinking up at the sky, now struggled to his feet.

"It was an accident!" he cried. "He can't do it again; he couldn't hit me in a week."

"Couldn't I?" remarked Dick.

His tone and air were calm and unruffled.

"No, you couldn't!"

"I'll show ye."

With the words, Dick attacked the redcoat fiercely.

He struck out rapidly, so rapidly in fact, that, try as he would, the redcoat could not parry all the blows.

He was struck several stinging blows and began staggering backward.

Dick saw that he had his man going, and, watching his chance, he suddenly leaped in and dealt the fellow a terrible blow squarely on the point of the jaw.

Down went the redcoat with a crash.

Dick had put all his force in the blow this time.

The result was that his opponent was rendered unconscious.

The other redcoat was almost paralyzed with amazement.

His under jaw dropped.

He stared at the youth as if he could not believe his eyes.

He well knew that his companion was a fighter.

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In truth, he had seen him come out first best in a dozen combats with fellow-soldiers.

Yet this seeming country youth had got the better of him without much apparent difficulty.

"By all that's wonderful," the man exclaimed, "this eats anything I ever saw or heard tell of!"

"Didn't I tell ye I'd lick him?" asked Dick, innocently.

"Yes, you did, but I didn't think you could do it."

"Waal, I did. Oh, I tell ye I'm a fighter, I am! I ain't never been licked yit."

"I can well believe it—now."

"Yas. Say, kin I go on now?"

The redcoat looked undecided.

"I don't know about that," he said, doubtfully.

"But ye sed ez how't ef I licked this feller I c'uld go on my way."

"I know I said that, but you had better wait."

"Whut fur?"

"Why, for all we know, you may have killed the man, and in that case I would have to hold you a prisoner."

Dick pretended to be frightened.

"Oh, say, mister, I guess thar hain't no danger uv thet, s thar?" he asked.

"I can't say; he is mighty still, I tell you!"

Dick knew there was no danger that the man was dead, but he pretended to be frightened.

"Oh, I hope I hain't killed him!" the youth quavered. "I never killed er man in my life, an' I'd feel orful bad if I had killed yer pardner."

"I guess you would feel bad!" in a fierce tone. "If you've killed him, you'll be hung for murder."

"Oh, I hope he hain't dead! Let's see ef we kin bring him to."

At this instant the redcoat stirred.

"Thar!" cried Dick. "I seen him move; he ain't dead. Say, mister, kin I go now?"

"Wait a minute."

"All right, I'll wait."

They watched the redcoat closely.

Presently he gave utterance to a sort of gasping groan, and opened his eyes.

"He's all right, mister; now kin I go?" asked Dick.

"Wait a bit until we see whether or not he wants to renew the fight."

Dick could not help smiling to himself.

"I do not think he will want to fight any more," he thought.

He said nothing, however.

The two waited patiently.

Presently the redcoat sat up and looked around him.

"How do you feel?" asked his comrade.

"Like I'd been kicked by a cavalry horse," was the growling reply.

"Do you want another try at this young fellow here?"

"No!" sullenly.

The redcoat turned to Dick.

"You can go," he said.

Dick went.

CHAPTER III.

MORE TROUBLE FOR DICK.

Congratulating himself on his good fortune at getting off so easily, Dick walked onward into Camden.

The encounter with the redcoat had not worried the youth in the least.

He would rather fight a dozen redcoats than to be forced to answer questions regarding himself.

As for the two sentinels, they looked after Dick for a few moments in silence, and then looked at each other.

"Well, Sam, what do you think of it?"

A curse escaped the redcoat who had received the thrashing at Dick's hands.

"What do I think of it?" he growled.

"Yes."

"Well, I think that young scoundrel is a wonder, that's what I think."

"He was certainly a great surprise."

"A surprise! Well, I should think so. Who'd ever thought that a green country gawk like him could be such a fighter?"

"I wouldn't have thought it, sure."

"Nor any one else."

"But you found out different, eh, Sam?"

"Yes, I did; but I'll tell you what it is, Hank, if I get a chance to get even with that young scoundrel, I'll do it."

"You'd better be careful, Sam; you might get the worst of it another time."

"Oh, I won't go for him again unless I'm sure I can have things my way."

Meantime, Dick had made his way onward until well within the town.

Redcoats were everywhere.

The town was overrun with them.

Many of the redcoats eyed Dick curiously as he sauntered down the street.

Some of them made remarks about Dick, the remarks being intended to be humorous.

Dick paid no attention, however.

He did not let on that he heard.

"I don't want to get into a difficulty with any of them, if I can help it," he said to himself. "If they go to interfering with me, however, I shall certainly protect myself."

The redcoats had been in Camden nearly a month.

They had enjoyed resting and doing nothing, but at the same time it had worn on them somewhat on account of the fact that there was very little to be found in the way of amusement.

It had, indeed, been very dull.

They were pining for amusement.

And now they thought they saw a chance for sport.

This gawky-looking country youth should be made to furnish it.

As Dick approached a group of redcoats, one of their number, a big, blatant fellow, with quite a reputation as a bully, said:

"Here's a chance for sport, boys."

"Where?" asked his comrades.

"Yonder," was the reply; "don't you see the country gawk? I'm going to have some fun with him."

The fellows were quite willing that their comrade should do so.

"Go it!" they said. "We haven't had any fun for a long time."

Dick was not quite close enough to hear what was said.

He had keen eyes and quick wit, however.

He guessed from the manner in which the redcoats were looking at him that they were talking of him.

"I think there are breakers ahead," he said to himself. "The probabilities are that some one in that gang will try to give me trouble."

Forewarned is forearmed, they say.

It was so in Dick's case.

He expected trouble, and so was prepared for it.

He had almost reached the group when the big redcoat stepped forward and confronted him.

"Oh, ho!" thought Dick. "So I am to have an encounter with a big bully, am I? Very well; I'll do the best I can to make it interesting for him."

"Hello, gawky!" the big redcoat cried.

"Hello, yourself!" replied Dick.

"When did you get out?"

Dick pretended to look surprised.

"Git out of whar?" he asked.

"Out of the pumpkin patch."

"Oh, erbout ther same time ye did, mister, I guess."

Dick's tone was cool and calm, and he smiled in a manner that was child-like in its innocence.

This was a cool slap at the redcoat.

He realized it.

His face grew red with anger.

His comrades snickered.

They realized that their companion had been worsted in the little interchange of words.

"That's a horse on you, Jim!" laughed one.

"Yes, the young fellow got the best of you," from another.

"I don't believe he's as green as he looks," said a third.

"See here, young fellow," said the big redcoat, threateningly, "do you know who you are talking to?"

Dick shook his head slowly, and then suddenly his face brightened.

"Say, ye hain't King George, air ye?" he asked, with pretended eagerness.

A roar went up from the redcoats.

This was the funniest thing they had run across for a long time.

Here was sport, with a vengeance.

Two or three of the redcoats slapped their big comrade on the shoulders.

"Hail to King George!" cried one.

"You're a fine-looking old king, you are!" from another.

"We are your obedient servants, your majesty," laughed a third.

The big redcoat was taken aback.

He seemed at a loss regarding what to say or do.

His under jaw dropped and he stared at Dick, in a puzzled manner.

The fellow's comrades thought they saw a chance to have considerable sport.

One of their number, a solemn-faced wag, stepped forward and addressed Dick, soberly.

"Young man," he said, "I don't know how you came to guess it, but this is indeed King George in disguise. You must promise that you will not tell a soul."

"I prommus," said Dick, with assumed eagerness, and then he rushed up close to the big redcoat.

"Say, Mister King George," he cried, "won't ye give me one of them air purty red suits like ye fellers hav got on, I'd like ter hev one, orful well?"

The redcoats roared again.

They were having lots of fun.

Attracted by the sound of the laughter, a crowd quickly gathered.

By this time the big redcoat had found his voice.

"Say, are you trying to make game of me, you blamed

oung scoundrel?" he cried, fiercely. "If I thought you were, I'd shake you out of your boots!" and he seized Dick by the shoulder and began shaking him.

Dick promptly jerked loose from the man.

He pretended to be angry.

"See here," he said, "don't ye go fur ter shakin' me het erway; I won't 'low yet ter do that, even ef ye air King George!"

The redcoats who had been in the group when Dick first approached, lost no time in telling the latercomers that the country youth thought their big comrade was King George.

This caused the crowd to roar.

This was the funniest thing they had ever heard of.

They began jollying the big redcoat who had started to have fun with Dick.

Somehow he had slipped up on the fun part of it.

Strange to say, he did not relish being taken for King George.

It gave his comrades too good an opportunity to jolly him.

He was one of those big, bullying fellows who always tried to be dignified and his dignity had been given a severe shock.

He was mad and eager to vent his anger upon some one.

Dick was, of course, the most likely object at hand.

Dick's words wherein he had stated that he did not allow any one to shake him, not even King George, gave the fellow more than sufficient excuse to bring about an encounter with the seeming country youth.

"Say, you're too saucy, altogether, you young gawk!" he cried. "Do you know what I am going to do to you?"

Dick shook his head.

"No, I dunno," he replied.

"Then I'll tell you: I am going to turn you across my knee and give you a good spanking."

Dick elevated his eyebrows.

"Oh, ye air?" he remarked.

"I am!"

"Whut fur?"

"For trying to make fun of me, you blasted young scoundrel!"

"Fur tryin' ter make fun uv ye?"

"Yes."

Dick shook his head.

"I didn't do et."

"You did!"

"In whut way, mister?"

"Didn't you call me King George?"

"Yas."

"Well, you were trying to make fun of me then, wasn't you?"

Dick elevated his eyebrows and shook his head.

"Uv course not!" he replied. "Ye air King George, ain't ye?"

A roar of laughter went up from the crowd.

The redcoat grew red in the face.

"No, I'm not King George!" he cried. "And, blast you, I believe you know it!"

Dick shook his head.

"No, I didn't know et!" he declared. "Ye air sech er big, important-looking feller that I thort ye mus' be King George."

Again the crowd roared.

The big bully grew redder still.

He felt that the laughter was as much at his expense as at that of Dick, and the knowledge angered him.

"Curse you for a blooming idiot!" the redcoat cried. "If you weren't a boy, and greener than grass, I'd knock your head off; as it is, I am going to give you a good spanking!"

Dick did not seem to be greatly alarmed.

"I'll bet yer hain't goin' ter do ennythin' uv ther kin'!" retorted Dick, defiantly.

"I'll bet so, too!" said a quiet voice, and a newcomer pushed his way through the crowd.

The newcomer was the sentinel who had been called Hank.

He had just been relieved from sentinel duty, and seeing the crowd gathered on the street, had made his way there to see what was going on.

He had reached there in time to hear Dick utter the defiant words, and had immediately pushed his way through the crowd.

He faced the big bully and said:

"Say, Jim, I'll wager you a five-pound note that you won't be able to give this young fellow a spanking."

The big redcoat, as well as all who stood around, were surprised.

"What do you know about the young gawk?" growled the big fellow, glaring at his comrade.

The other laughed.

"That is my affair," he said; "do you take me up?"

The other hesitated.

"Aha! You hesitate," laughed Hank; "you have some doubts regarding your ability to administer a spanking to this young fellow, after all, eh?"

The big redcoat frowned.

"No, I haven't any doubts regarding it!" he growled.

"Then you'll take the wager?"

"I will."

"All right, put up your money."

Both men drew banknotes from their pocket.

Each counted out the required sum.

They placed the money in the hands of one of their comrades.

"Now, then," said Hank, with a laugh, "let's see you give this young fellow a spanking."

"I'll do it all right enough; but, first, I wish to ask you a question."

"Go ahead; what is it?"

"What made you so willing to wager that I could not give this young gawk a spanking?"

Hank laughed.

"It is very simple; I've had the opportunity of seeing what the young man can do."

"Humph!" grunted the big bully; "what did you see him do?"

The people in the crowd craned their necks and listened eagerly for Hank's reply.

It came promptly:

"I saw him give Sam a good thrashing."

A murmur of surprise went up from the crowd.

"What's that?"

"You don't mean to say he thrashed Sam Saunders?"

"What! That country gawk?"

"Impossible!"

Such were a few of the exclamations.

"There's nothing impossible about it," said Hank. "He did it, all right."

"When?" asked the big bully, with an air of interest.

"Not ten minutes ago, as he was coming into the town."

There was a look of surprise on the big fellow's face as he looked Dick over from head to foot.

He did not doubt his ability to do what he had wagered he would do, however.

"I'll give the young scoundrel a spanking, just the same," he said, confidently.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK SPANKS A BULLY.

As the big fellow spoke thus, he made a step forward. The crowd drew a long breath.

Every eye was on the principals in this strange affair. Doubtless there was not, with the exception of Hank, a person among the spectators who did not believe the big redcoat would be able to make his threat good.

"Hank'll lose his money," said one, and all with hearing nodded their heads.

That is, all save Hank.

He singled out the speaker, and, pointing his finger him, said:

"I'll bet you a five-pound note I don't lose the money. The other did not wish to bet."

He got out of it by saying he didn't have the mon. Dick stood there quietly while the conversation was goi on.

To look at him one would have thought he had b little interest in what was going on.

He was calm and unruffled.

He seemed less excited than the majority of the spe tators.

And, indeed, he was less excited.

Dick had great confidence in himself.

It was not of the reckless, foolish order, but was a co fidence born of much experience in taking care of hi self.

As the redcoat took the step forward, Dick gather himself together for the struggle.

He realized that he had quite a task before him.

The redcoat was a large fellow.

He had a magnificent physique.

He was undoubtedly very strong.

But so was Dick strong.

He believed that large as the redcoat was, he was t fellow's match.

As the redcoat advanced, Dick waved him back.

"Hol' on, mister!" he said.

The man paused.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, gruffly. "To b off, I suppose."

Dick shook his head.

"No, not that," he replied.

"What, then?"

"I wants ter warn ye."

"To warn me?"

"Yas."

"Of what?"

"Of yer danger."

"Of my danger?"

"Yas."

"How am I in any danger?"

"W'y, by attackin' me!"

The crowd laughed.

The bully sneered.

"Say, for a green country gawk who knows scar enough to travel around the country alone, you ha

"More cool nerve than any one I ever saw!" the redcoat howled. "The idea of me being in any danger through attacking you. Why, it is absurd!"

"Ye think so?"

Dick's face was calm and impassive.

"I know so."

"I guess ye mean ye think ye know."

The crowd laughed.

They were enjoying the scene.

Green though they thought he was, the spectators could not help admiring the calm impassiveness, the cool audacity of the supposed country youth.

"Bah!" cried the bully. "Enough of this talk; you do not know what you are saying, anyway. Look out for yourself!"

The redcoat made another step toward Dick.

Again the youth waved him back.

"Hol' on!" again cried Dick.

The bully paused.

He gave vent to an exclamation of vexation.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I want ter warn ye."

A muttered curse escaped the lips of the bully.

"You said that before," he growled.

"I meant it, too, mister!"

"Oh, you did?"

"Yas; ye see, I'm er fair man, mister, I don't wanter take advantage uv ennybody, an' ye don't know whut er 'd feller I am when I'm riled."

Again the crowd laughed.

An exclamation of impatience escaped the bully.

"Thank you," he remarked, sarcastically; "I'm very much obliged to you for the consideration which you show for my welfare. I will just say, however, that you had better look out for yourself and not worry about me."

"Oh, all right," said Dick, calmly. "I jes' didn't want ter be so ez ennybody c'd say arter I give ye ther ankin' thet I took a unfa'r advantage uv ye."

The crowd roared.

The redcoat turned red, then white with rage.

He fairly danced, he was so angry.

"What's that!" he almost howled. "Did I understand you to say that you will——"

"Spank ye?" interrupted Dick. "Yas, that's jes' whut m ergoin' ter do."

"I'm betting he'll do it, too," said Hank. "Oh, he's a rror!"

With a howl of rage the big redcoat leaped forward.

His arms were outstretched.

He attempted to seize Dick.

Dick was too quick for the fellow, however.

He leaped to one side, thus avoiding the man's grasp.

Quick as a flash his right arm shot out.

His fist caught the big bully on the jaw.

Crack!

The bully reeled backward.

The blow was a powerful one, but the bully was a big fellow, and it did not knock him down.

After staggering backward a few paces; the redcoat recovered his balance.

Giving utterance to a roar of rage, he again rushed at Dick.

The crowd had been so amazed by the powerful blow that Dick had dealt his big opponent, that, for the moment, they were stricken dumb.

By the time they had recovered the use of their voices the redcoat had renewed the attack.

Again the big bully attempted to seize Dick.

Again Dick leaped to one side—the other side this time—and then once more his fist shot out.

Crack!

Again Dick's fist landed squarely upon the redcoat's jaw, staggering him backward as before.

This time, however, Dick followed up his advantage.

He leaped forward.

Again his arm shot out.

His fist landed in the pit of the redcoat's stomach.

It was a terrific stroke.

A gasping groan escaped the lips of the bully.

The force of the blow doubled him up like a jack-knife. Down he sat, with a thump.

The stricken man clasped his stomach with his hands.

His face grew deathly white.

A hollow groan escaped his lips.

He gasped and gurgled in an attempt to get his breath. The spectators stared in open-mouthed amazement.

"Great Gulliver!"

"Did you ever!"

"That beats anything I ever saw!"

"Who would have thought it?"

"I would not have believed it possible."

Such were a few of the exclamations uttered by the spectators.

"I would," said the redcoat called Hank. "I saw this young fellow in action a little while ago, as I told you, and I knew what he could do."

All eyes were upon Dick and the fallen redcoat.

Dick, after delivering the last terrible blow, had stepped

back and he now stood gazing calmly down upon his opponent.

"I leeve et ter ye all ef I didn't give him fa'r warnin'," remarked Dick, in his innocent way.

"Oh, you gave him plenty of warning," said Hank, "and so did I. I told him he couldn't do anything with you."

"I guess he'll begin to think so himself," remarked one of the spectators.

By this time the bully was breathing again.

His face was pale and he was evidently in great pain.

He was a pretty game fellow, though, after all.

He began struggling to his feet.

He finally succeeded in getting upon his feet, but found that he could not straighten up.

The pain was still so great that he had to keep his body slanted forward at a considerable angle.

The spectators looked from the redcoat to Dick.

It was evident that they were looking to see if Dick would attack the man.

They need not have feared.

Dick was altogether too fair-minded to take advantage of any man.

He made no move toward attacking.

At the end of ten minutes or so the redcoat managed to get straightened up again.

Still Dick made no motion toward attacking the redcoat.

He waited for his opponent to take the initiative.

Presently the redcoat did so.

He advanced upon Dick.

"Look out for yourself!" in a grim, threatening tone. "I'm going to just about kill you, young fellow. I am going to get even with you for those blows."

"I guess ye'd better look out yerself, mister," was all Dick said.

And the spectators, influenced thereto by the respect which they had suddenly acquired for the youth's prowess, nodded their heads as much as to say they thought this was good advice.

The redcoat's answer was a growl of rage and a furious onslaught of blows.

He struck out wildly, fiercely and rapidly.

It was evident that he had made up his mind to knock the youth senseless and administer the spanking afterward.

This was a wise plan and would have been all right had he been able to put it into effect.

Dick was to have something to say regarding the matter.

He did not intend to let the redcoat knock him senseless if he could help it.

He thought that he could.

Being attacked so furiously, he acted on the defensive for a while.

He ducked, dodged and evaded the wild blows of his opponent, with seeming ease.

The redcoat struck perhaps fifty blows.

Of these, not more than half a dozen took effect, and these struck the youth, glancingly, and did no damage.

Dick had not given up his purpose of administering spanking to the big redcoat.

He was simply biding his time and waiting for an opportunity to get a certain hold.

If he could secure that hold he would have his opponent, large man though he was, completely at his mercy.

Presently the redcoat became so exhausted by the violence of his efforts that he had to pause and drop his hands.

This was Dick's opportunity.

Quick as lightning he leaped in and seized hold of the redcoat.

He secured the hold which he wished to secure.

In a twinkling, almost—so quickly, indeed, that the spectators could not see how it was done—Dick jerked the redcoat down.

At the same instant Dick dropped on one knee.

He whirled the redcoat over so that he was face downward and bent the fellow across his knee.

It was Dick's left knee that the man lay across.

Holding the redcoat's coat-collar with his left hand, Dick threw his right leg over the legs of his opponent.

In this manner he held the fellow helpless.

This left Dick's right hand free to be used, and he used it.

He did what he had said he would do.

He administered to the helpless redcoat a good spanking!

The redcoat kicked, struggled and cursed.

He tried to get free, but could not do so.

He threatened what he would do when he did get free, but his threats had no effect.

Dick kept on spanking.

It was a strange and wonderful spectacle.

The spectators stared in open-mouthed, wondering amazement.

Then the comical side of the affair appealed to them and they roared with laughter.

"Oh, I knew he would do it!" cried Hank, in delight. "I tell you that young fellow is a terror."

"He certainly is."

"He is a wonder!"

"I would not have believed any man could do what he has done, let alone a youth like him."

Such were a few of the exclamations from the crowd.

Dick calmly kept on spanking the redcoat.

A few moments thus, and then Dick released the redcoat and assisted him to his feet.

As the redcoat whirled, fiercely, toward Dick, the youth held up his hands.

"Take my advice, mister," he said, in a calm, even tone, "give it up; ef ye don't, I'm afeerd I'll hev ter hurt ye."

CHAPTER V.

DICK FIGHTS A DUEL.

But the redcoat was in no condition of mind to listen to reason.

What! Give it up after he had been made a laughing stock by this verdant country youth? Never!

He would not give it up.

His dignity had suffered.

He must have revenge.

He would pound the life half out of the youth.

He leaped forward to the attack.

The look of a demon was in his eyes.

Dick realized that the redcoat was but little better than madman.

Should he succeed in getting hold of Dick in his present frame of mind, and got a good hold, he would murder the youth.

Realizing this, Dick was determined not to permit this.

As the redcoat leaped forward, Dick sprang to one side.

He avoided the other's grasp.

His eye quickly measured the distance.

His right arm shot out.

Crack!

His fist struck the redcoat full on the jaw.

It was a terrible stroke.

Dick's blood was up now.

He had put all his force into the blow.

The result was that the redcoat went down as if he had been struck by a sledgehammer.

He struck the ground with a dull thud.

A long-drawn-out "Ah-h-h-h-h!" escaped the crowd.

Few present had ever seen such a blow.

They gazed at Dick with open-mouthed amazement.

"What manner of youth was this?" they asked themselves.

He was certainly the most wonderful country boy they had ever seen.

They looked from Dick to the fallen man.

The redcoat lay still.

He had been knocked senseless by the terrible blow.

Dick looked around upon the faces of the spectators.

"I leave it to you uns ef I didn't give him fa'r warnin,'" Dick said, in his simple way. "I told him I'd hev ter hurt him ef he didn't let me be."

"Oh, you're all right!" said Hank, who was delighted on account of the fact that he had won five pounds. "You didn't take any unfair advantage of him. No one will accuse you of having done so."

"I'm glad uv thet, mister."

By this time the redcoat showed signs of returning consciousness.

He stirred slightly.

Presently he opened his eyes.

A few moments later he rose to a sitting posture.

He looked about him in a dazed, uncertain sort of way. His gaze presently rested upon Dick.

The light of understanding came back into his eyes. They blazed with anger.

The redcoat scrambled to his feet.

"So you're still here, are you, you young scoundrel!" he hissed. "Good! I'll have your life's blood for this!"

Before beginning the attack on Dick, the redcoat had unbuckled his sword and laid it on the ground.

Stooping quickly, he drew his sword out of the scabbard, and, straightening up, leaped toward Dick.

There was murder in the redcoat's eye.

That he intended to run the supposed country youth through was evident.

The fellow's comrades, however, were fair-minded fellows.

Dick had made such a wonderful fight that he had won their admiration.

Two or three of the fellow's comrades had leaped forward and seized him.

"You are mad!" they cried: "Would you commit murder?"

The infuriated redcoat struggled fiercely.

"I'll have his life's blood!" he cried. "Do you suppose I am going to allow myself to be knocked about in this fashion and not do anything to get even? No! I am made of flesh and blood, not of wood. One or the other of us shall not leave this spot alive!"

The redcoats saw that their comrade was in deadly earnest.

His pride had been so humbled, he had been made such

a laughing stock of by this seeming country youth, that he would never be able to hold up his head or pose as a bully again.

He would never be satisfied until he had caused the blood of his youthful conqueror to flow.

His comrades, however, were determined that he should not commit murder.

"You mustn't do this," they said, "be reasonable; you must not cut the youth down in cold blood. You must give him a chance for his life."

This gave the big bully an idea.

He ceased struggling.

"All right," he said; "that suits me exactly. I will give him a chance for his life; he has got to fight me, and if he can save his miserable life he is quite welcome to do so."

The redcoats hardly knew what to say or do.

They felt that this would be but little better than murder.

They reasoned that the country youth could know little or nothing regarding the use of either sword or firearms.

It would not be a fight, they thought.

It would be a slaughter.

Dick came to their assistance, however.

He had full knowledge of the situation.

He knew that he would have to fight the redcoat with other than nature's weapons before the fellow would be satisfied.

So he said, in his calm, innocent fashion:

"Ef ther feller ain't satersfied an' wants ter fight er duel with me, I'm willin'; I don't wanter hurt him, but ef he will hev et, I kain't he'p et, kin I?"

"Of course you can't," said the redcoat called Hank.

Then he stepped forward, and, taking Dick by the arm, led him back a few paces.

"Young fellow, that man will kill you, sure," Hank said, in Dick's ear. "He's one of the best swordsmen in the regiment."

"Then we won't fight with swords," said Dick, calmly. "How is he with er pistol?"

"He's a tolerably fair shot, I think; can you handle a pistol?"

"I'm er purty good shot, mister; I guess I kin hol' my own with him."

"All right, then; as the challenged party, you are entitled to the choice of weapons, and you may choose pistols if you like. Shall I act as your second?"

"Ef ye pleeze, mister, I'll be glad ter hev ye."

"All right, I'll act for you."

The crowd had watched the progress of affairs with eager interest.

They wondered if they were to be given still further entertainment.

They soon found that such was the case.

The redcoat called Hank advanced and faced the big bully.

"Well?" the bully growled.

"The young fellow says that he will fight you."

"Good enough. I'll spit him as I would a turkey!"

"But he won't choose swords."

The redcoat looked somewhat disappointed.

"Oh, he won't?"

"No."

"What will he choose?"

"Pistols."

"Oh, all right; it doesn't matter to me. I'll put a bullet through him just as sure as he stands up in front of me."

"Perhaps so; that will be determined later."

"Oh, I'll do it, sure!" and the bully glared at Dick in a ferocious manner.

The youth merely smiled in the most innocent manner imaginable.

He said nothing, however.

"A duel! A duel!"

"There's to be a duel, sure enough!"

"The young fellow is going to fight!"

"I'll wager that he will give a good account of himself, too!"

Such were a few of the exclamations from the crowd.

Now that it was decided that there was to be a fair fight, the friends of the bully released him, knowing that he would not try to cut Dick down.

One of their number was chosen by the bully to act as his second, and he and Hank quickly completed the arrangements.

Of course, the duel could not be held within the limits of the town, so an adjournment was taken to a field half a mile distant.

This was a nice place for an affair of this kind.

There was plenty of room for the principals, and also for the spectators.

Lots of room was needed for the spectators.

The news had spread rapidly that a duel was to be fought, and nearly the entire British army was out to witness it.

Hundreds who had not seen the encounter between Dick and the bully were surprised when they saw that their

comrade's opponent was, apparently, a green, country youth.

They laughed at the absurdity of such a thing as that their comrade should fight a duel with the youth.

When the matter was explained to them, however, they regarded the supposed country youth with renewed interest.

The distance had been stepped off, and then the pistols were loaded.

The principals took their places.

The loaded pistols were placed in their hands.

They were to fire a single shot, and then if they were not satisfied, another pair of pistols would be placed in their hands and they would have another try.

This would be kept up till one or both were satisfied.

A man was chosen to give the word.

He took his place midway between the principals, and somewhat to one side, so as to be out of range.

"I will say, 'One, two, three, fire!'" he called out. "At the word, you are at liberty to fire, but be careful not to fire before the word is given."

The principals bowed to denote that they understood.

When placing Dick in position, Hank had asked the youth how he felt.

"I feel all right," Dick had replied.

"Are your nerves steady?"

"Yas, stiddy as er rock."

Hank was satisfied.

He gazed upon the youth admiringly.

"He's certainly the queerest country youth I have ever seen," he thought. "I rather think he will give a good account of himself in this affair."

And Dick did feel all right, as he had told his second.

Of course, Dick knew there was a chance that he might be killed by the shot of the redcoat.

But what of that? He was simply doing his duty, trying to enter the camp of the enemy to spy upon them, and he took his life in his hands in doing so.

He had done so many times, and this duel, as it could not be avoided, would have to be met.

Dick looked at the matter philosophically.

If he succeeded in getting the better of his adversary he would be all right.

He would be given the freedom of the town, and could mingle with the redcoats at will.

He would thus be given a good opportunity to pick up all the information which he wished to acquire.

The game was certainly worth the candle, and Dick faced the affair unflinchingly.

It was not the first time he had been engaged in an affair of this kind.

He had fought two or three duels, and had always come out first best.

He thought that he stood a good chance of doing so this time.

His opponent had been sadly jarred by the terrible thumps which Dick had given him; then, too, he was wild with anger, and was fairly trembling with eagerness to get a chance to take the life of the youth who had handled him so roughly.

The result could not be other than that his aim would be somewhat interfered with.

He would be nervous, and not able to shoot with his accustomed skill.

So Dick reasoned, at any rate, and doubtless his reasoning was well founded.

Dick, on his part, was an expert shot with the pistol.

He had practiced an hour or two a day, for days, weeks and months, and he had become so expert that he could put a pistol ball just about where he wished to, at any reasonable distance.

He did not doubt his ability to wing the redcoat at the first fire.

Not wishing to give the redcoat any more chance at him than was absolutely necessary, Dick was determined to so wound the fellow that he would not wish to continue the fight after the first exchange of shots.

"Are you ready?" called out the master of ceremonies.

"Ready!" came from Dick and the bully in unison.

As they spoke, they lifted their pistols and took deliberate aim at each other.

"One!"

The crowd leaned forward and craned its neck, so to speak.

"Two!"

The breath of the spectators came in short, spasmodic efforts.

"Three!"

The principals stood there like statues.

The crowd held its breath.

"Fire!"

Crack!—crack!

CHAPTER VI.

AT WORK.

The two reports sounded almost together, but Dick had been just a shade quicker to fire than his opponent.

His aim was true.

He had no wish to kill the redcoat, so had aimed at his shoulder.

The bullet struck the man exactly where Dick aimed that it should.

With a wild cry of pain and rage commingled, the redcoat dropped his pistol and reeling backward, fell to the ground.

A cry of surprise went up from the crowd.

They had not expected that the green-looking country youth would be able to hold his own with their comrade.

They had looked upon him—that is, the majority had, there were some who shrewdly expected something different—as being practically as good as dead and buried.

Instead, he had not been even injured by the redcoat's shot.

At least, he stood there, calm and quiet.

If he had been hit, he had good nerve, for he did not show that he was injured.

Hank rushed up to Dick.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, eagerly.

Dick shook his head.

"Noap," he replied; "he never tetched me."

"But you gave him a severe wound, I judge."

"I guess so, mister. I hope ez howt I hain't killed ther feller."

"Wait here and I will go and see."

Hank hastened over to where the wounded redcoat lay.

He was surrounded by a crowd of his comrades, and was groaning at a terrible rate.

"Where did the bullet hit him?" asked Hank.

"In the shoulder," replied one of the men.

"Is it a serious wound?"

"Well, pretty serious, I should say."

"Too much so for him to go on with the duel?"

"Oh, yes; he won't take any further hand in a duel to-day."

"All right; I'll go back and tell my man so."

"You might as well; but say, who would have thought that that gawky fellow could shoot so well?"

"I thought so, all the time."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"What made you think so?"

"Because he had already proved himself to be a wonder with his fists, and as a youth of strength and action. I am not surprised that he has proved himself a good pistol shot."

"Well, I am; I don't understand it."

"I do; you will find some of the best rifle and pistol

shots in the world down here in the mountains of North and South Carolina."

"That may be true; but one would not expect to find them among the boys."

"Oh, I don't know; age doesn't cut much figure. The boys do lots of hunting, and they learn to handle all kinds of firearms at a very early age."

"I guess you are right."

Hank turned and went back to where Dick stood.

"He is not fatally wounded," the redcoat said; "but he is too badly hurt to continue the fight, so it is all over and you may go as soon as you like."

Dick hesitated.

The other noticed this.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I won't darst ter go inter ther town, now, will I?" asked Dick.

The redcoat looked surprised.

"Why not?"

"Waal, ye see, some uv ther fellers whut is fr'en's uv ther man I hed this heer trubble with will go fur me won't they?"

Hank shook his head.

"Oh, no, I think not," he replied.

"Ye think not?"

Dick looked doubtful.

Indeed, he felt that way.

That was the reason he asked Hank.

He knew that the man's judgment would be good, and that he would know whether or not this was likely to happen.

"I am sure none of the boys will bother you. It was a fair fight, and even the best friend in the world of the wounded man would have no reason to attack you."

Dick looked thoughtful.

"Well, I hope ye air right," he said, slowly; "I hev hed enuff trubble, a'reddy, an' I don't wanter git inter enny more."

"Oh, I don't think you need be at all afraid."

Dick looked thoughtful.

"Air ye goin' inter town now?" he asked.

Hank nodded.

"Kin I go along uv ye?"

"Of course; come along. I'll see to it that none of the boys bother you—though I know they wouldn't try to do so, anyway."

The two started.

As Hank had stated he was sure would be the case, none of the redcoats made the least move toward doing anything to Dick.

They looked at the youth, curiously, that was all.

Both fights with the big redcoat had been fair ones, and they were, in the main, fair-minded fellows and felt that they had no cause to pick a fuss with the youth.

To tell the truth, there was hardly one among them who would have cared to do so.

The manner in which Dick had handled their big comrade was sufficient to cause them to have a great deal of respect for the youth's prowess.

It was now well along toward evening.

Dick noted with some uneasiness that his exploits had made him an object of unusual interest.

Everybody was looking at him.

"If there is any one around who knows me, he may penetrate my disguise," the youth thought; "and that would be bad. I would receive short shrift and a long rope."

He decided that it would be best for him to get in somewhere, where he would not be such a conspicuous object.

It was about supper-time, and he entered a tavern and asked if he could get his supper.

The tavern-keeper said that supper would be ready in a few minutes, and Dick went to the washstand in the corner and washed his face and hands, and combed his hair.

The news of his wonderful exploits had become known even in here, however, and all who were in the tavern looked at the youth with great interest and curiosity.

"Jove! I am a regular show," thought Dick; "I am afraid some fellow will recognize me and then my cake will be dough."

He went into the dining-room at once and proceeded to eat his supper.

By the time he had finished it was dark outside.

Dick hardly knew what to do.

He knew that if he went out on the street he would be followed by a crowd of curious redcoats and citizens.

This he did not like at all.

He wished to be able to get around without attracting any attention.

Dick wished to, if possible, play the spy on General Cornwallis.

He had learned where the general's headquarters were.

It would be impossible for him to do anything without being detected, however, unless he fooled the redcoats by a trick.

He decided to try to do this.

He went to the tavern-keeper.

"I hev walked er good ways ter-day," he said, "an' I'm

purty tired. I guess ez howt I'll go ter bed, ef ye kin let me hev er room fur ter-night."

The tavern-keeper said he had an empty room that the youth could have, and he took a candle and led the way upstairs, Dick following.

As the door closed after the youth, the crowd which had filled the barroom and office of the tavern drew a long breath of disappointment.

The crowd, knowing that Dick was there, had gathered with the purpose of keeping watch of the youth so as to be on hand when he went out on the street, as they supposed he would do.

They thought that if he went out on the street the probabilities were that he would get into trouble and there would be more sport.

The retirement of the country youth—as they supposed he was—put a stop to everything. There would be no more fun that night.

So the crowd withdrew from the tavern, and went out on the street and reported.

Now, as may be supposed, Dick had no intention of going to bed.

He had come to Camden to work, not to sleep.

And night would be the best time for him to work. Darkness was his best friend.

As soon as he was alone in his room, Dick fastened the door.

Then he went to the one window and made an observation.

In coming to the room, a long hall had been traversed.

Dick was not surprised to find, therefore, that his room faced toward the rear of the building.

This suited the youth, exactly.

It was just as he wished it to be.

He was sure he would be able to get out through the window and down and away without being seen.

He raised the window and leaned out.

To his delight he found that there was a shed roof not two feet below the window-ledge.

The roof sloped down till at the lower edge it was no more than ten feet from the ground.

It would be the easiest thing in the world to climb out make his way down to the edge of the shed roof and leap to the ground.

Dick decided to wait a while, however.

It was a bit too early, he thought.

He sat down and waited perhaps an hour.

Then he raised the window once more, climbed out through it and then made his way down the sloping roof and leaped to the ground.

He stood perfectly still for a few moments.

He looked all around.

He wished to see whether or not he had attracted the attention of any one.

He thought it barely possible that some one might be in the vicinity and that his manœuvre might have been seen.

As no one appeared, however, as if to investigate, he decided that his move had not been observed.

Dick had learned that General Cornwallis had his headquarters in a large house at the farther edge of the town.

The youth did not wish to be seen, so he slipped out of the town, the tavern being near the edge, and was soon in the timber which bordered it at that side.

Dick made his way along, keeping well within the edge of the timber.

When Dick came to a point even with the house in which the British general had his quarters, he left the shelter of the timber and stole forward.

He approached the building from the rear.

Pausing at a distance of perhaps twenty yards, Dick surveyed the house with interest.

Presently he advanced to the building.

The house was detached, standing alone.

The nearest houses at either side were perhaps a hundred feet distant.

Dick decided to investigate even more closely.

He stepped around the corner of the house and made his way along its side.

He moved slowly and carefully.

Presently he reached the front end of the house.

He peered around the corner.

At first Dick saw no one in the vicinity.

The house was well up toward the end of the town, away from the business portion, and there was nothing to draw the soldiers up that way unless they came on business.

Presently Dick saw a couple of men approaching.

The moon was shining and he could see them quite plainly.

He was on the opposite side of the house, however, in the deep shadow, so was not in much danger of being seen.

As the men drew near, Dick saw by their uniforms that they were British officers.

He listened to their conversation as they approached.

From it he learned that the officers were visiting headquarters in obedience to an order to that effect from General Cornwallis.

"What is in the wind, anyway, Horton?" Dick heard one of the two say as they reached the steps leading up to the front door.

"I don't know," replied the other. "I rather think, though, that General Cornwallis contemplates making a move of some kind at an early date."

"I shouldn't wonder; well, I'm ready to go at any time. I'm getting tired of this place."

"So am I; it has been dull enough, sure. But that young fellow from the country made it lively enough this afternoon, didn't he?" and the officer chuckled.

"I should say he did. Say, do you know, that was rather a strange affair."

"It certainly turned out differently from what most of us expected."

The two ran up the steps and knocked on the door.

The door was opened promptly and the officers disappeared inside the house.

The door closed with a slam and all was silence.

"There is going to be a council of war held in there," said Dick to himself, "and by hook or crook I must hear what is said by the redcoats."

CHAPTER VII.

A HASTY DEPARTURE.

Dick began debating the subject of how he was to get into the house.

He thought the matter over for a few minutes.

While thus engaged he heard footsteps.

He peered cautiously around the corner of the house.

Two men were approaching.

Dick could see by their uniforms that they were British officers.

"There come a couple more," he said to himself. "Jove! I must get into the house somehow."

The two men reached the steps, ascended them, knocked on the door and were admitted.

Dick thought it was time for him to act.

He decided that the best point for him to make the attempt at entering would be the rear.

He quickly made his way back along the side of the house.

Reaching the rear, he walked out away from the house a few yards and took an observation.

There were a door and two windows at the rear of the house.

Dick decided to try these.

With him, to decide was to act.

He advanced and tried the door.

It was locked.

This did not surprise Dick.

Neither did it daunt him.

He had expected it.

Stepping to one of the windows he tried to raise it.

It was fastened.

Dick made his way across to the other window.

He tried to raise it.

He could not do so.

It, also, was fastened.

"That's bad," thought Dick; "I don't see how I am going to get into this house, after all."

He pondered a few moments.

He looked upward.

The house was two stories and a half high.

There were three windows in the upper story.

"If I could only get at those windows now, I would be all right," thought Dick; "the chances are good that those windows are not fastened. People are not so careful about upstairs windows, as a rule."

But that was the trouble.

He had no way of getting to these windows.

There was no shed roof on which he could get, nor was there anything about the place so far as Dick could see that could be turned into a temporary ladder.

He was somewhat stumped—that is, for the time being.

He was as determined as ever to get into the house and overhear the conversation between General Cornwallis and his officers.

But how was he to do it?

That was the question.

And a difficult one, too.

While pondering the situation, Dick's eyes dropped and he gave a start.

"The cellarway!" he exclaimed to himself. "Why did I not think of that before?"

Dick stepped forward.

Taking hold of the outside slanting door, he lifted.

The door came up easily.

"So far, so good," thought the youth.

He made his way down the short flight of steps.

At the foot was another door.

This door was set perpendicularly in the cellar wall.

Dick felt around until he got hold of the thumb-latch.

He pressed the thumb-latch and pushed against the door.

To his joy the door opened.

"Good!" the youth said to himself. "I think I will be able to put myself in a position to overhear the conversation of those British officers, after all."

It was quite dark in the cellar.

Dick could scarcely see his hand before his face.

He began making his way across the cellar.

He had to feel his way.

He hunted around for a minute or two and then a exclamation of satisfaction escaped him.

"Ah! here are the steps leading up to the kitchen," he murmured. "I will soon know whether or not I am to succeed in getting in."

Dick made his way up the steps.

He was careful not to make any noise.

Some one might be in the kitchen and hear him.

If this should happen, Dick's plan would be a failure.

On reaching the top of the steps, Dick tried the door. To his satisfaction it was unfastened.

Dick pushed it open an inch or two and tried to look into the room beyond.

He could not do so; the room was dark.

This suited him exactly.

Pushing the door farther open, Dick stepped through into the room.

Slowly and carefully he made his way across it.

Presently he reached the wall.

He felt his way along the wall till he came to the door.

He opened the door carefully.

He looked out into a dimly lighted hall.

Dick stuck his head out into the hall and took an observation.

The hall extended, seemingly, the full length of the house.

Away toward the front a stairway led to the upstairs.

"I rather think I will find my men upstairs," the youth thought. "I'll go slow, however, and make sure they are not down here before going upstairs."

Dick made his way slowly and cautiously along the hall.

At each door that he came to he paused and listened.

At the third door the sound of voices came to his ears.

"By Jove! I believe they are downstairs, after all," the youth thought.

He stooped and placed his ear to the keyhole.

He could hear plainer now.

He could distinguish many of the words spoken.

"They're in there, sure enough," the youth said to himself. "Now to see if I can understand enough of their conversation to enable me to figure out what they are planning to do."

Dick's hearing was very keen.

After listening intently a few moments, he succeeded in getting the run of the conversation.

"I understand that there are a great many Tories u

in the highlands," Dick heard a voice, which he was confident was that of Cornwallis, say.

"So I understand, your excellency," replied a voice.

"I have been thinking the matter over," continued Cornwallis, "and I have made up my mind to try to enlist a large number of them in the king's service."

"That would be a good plan, I think, your excellency."

"Yes, I think so; if we can secure a couple of thousand of them, they will be of material assistance to us."

"No doubt of it, your excellency."

"None at all; and I have decided to send you, Major Ferguson, with a small force, and have you scour the highlands for loyalists who will be willing to join our army."

"I shall be glad to go on this expedition, your excellency," in the voice that had spoken before. "When will you wish me to start?"

"Oh, as soon as you can get ready; there is no particular hurry, however; two or three days hence will be time enough."

"Very well, your excellency, I will begin making my preparations at once; and when I have finished my work shall I come back here?"

"No; we will be here but a short time longer. We're going up into North Carolina and you may join us at Charlotte."

"Very well, your excellency."

At this instant, Dick was given a rude surprise. He felt himself suddenly seized from behind. Being taken by surprise, Dick was at a big disadvantage. He was unable to prevent himself from being thrown to the floor.

As Dick fell, he caught a glimpse of his assailant.

The latter was a big, ugly-faced negro.

He was barefooted, which had enabled him to slip upon Dick without being heard.

Although taken by surprise and at a disadvantage, Dick did not lose his head.

Even as he was going down the youth's quick mind was working.

The result of this was quickly shown.

As Dick's shoulder struck the floor, his knees came up. They struck the negro in the chest with such force as to lift him a foot or more and cause him to give utterance to an exclamation of pain.

Dick followed up his advantage.

Quick as a flash he lowered his knees and raised his feet. Dexterously planting his feet against the broad chest of the negro, Dick suddenly kicked out with all his strength.

The negro was hurled backward a distance of ten feet,

at least. He alighted fairly upon his back, with a crash that shook the house.

At the same time he gave utterance to a wild yell of pain and terror that was something terrible to listen to.

"Foah de Lawd, I'se a dead niggah, shuah!" the black man howled.

The fact of the matter was that the negro was taken so by surprise, had had the tables turned on him so quickly and completely that, taken in connection with the jar of the fall, his dull wits had been scattered to the winds, and he really did not know what had struck him.

As for Dick, he acted instantly.

He realized that he was in great danger.

He knew that the howls of the negro and the jar of his fall would quickly bring the British officers out into the hall.

Dick realized that he must not be there when they came.

He would have to act with lightning-like quickness, however.

Dick was not sure he could accomplish it, but he could try.

As the negro struck the floor, the youth leaped to his feet.

He ran swiftly along the hall toward the rear of the house.

In doing so, he had to pass the negro.

That worthy, though badly rattled and shaken up, was still dangerous.

As Dick was passing, the colored fellow threw up his hand and caught the youth by the ankle.

Dick had not expected this, and, as a result, he was thrown to the floor with considerable force.

To wrench his ankle loose from the negro's grasp and leap to his feet took but an instant, however.

Dick ran swiftly onward and soon reached the door leading into the kitchen.

As he opened the door and leaped through into the kitchen the redcoats came rushing out into the hall.

They got a faint, vanishing glimpse of Dick, but not sufficient to enable them to distinguish what sort of looking fellow Dick was.

They saw that it was a human being, and that was all. The negro was just scrambling to his feet.

"What was all this noise about, Sambo?" cried General Cornwallis. "Who was that fellow who disappeared through the doorway just now?"

"Foah de Lawd, I dunno, massa," stammered the negro.

"He wuz er man, an' dat's all I know."

"A man, eh, what was he doing here?"

"He wuz a-listenin' at de keyhole, massa."

"A spy!" cried General Cornwallis, excitedly. "After him, men!"

The four men rushed down the hall, Sambo following close upon their heels.

They rushed through the doorway into the kitchen.

It was so dark in there they could see nothing.

"A light, quick, Sambo!" cried General Cornwallis. "Bring a candle."

Sambo rushed back into the hall, but was back in the kitchen again in a few moments with the candle.

The redcoats gave a hasty glance around the room.

Of course, Dick was not there.

"He has gone down into the cellar, I'll wager!" cried one of the redcoats.

As he spoke, he leaped forward and opened the door leading to the cellar stairs.

"Give me the candle, Sambo," he cried; "we may get him yet."

The officer took the candle from Sambo's hand, and, drawing his sword, made his way down the cellar stairs.

"Don't think of attempting to offer resistance," he called out; "we are five to one, and you would stand no chance at all."

Of course, there was no reply.

Dick had not paused in the cellar.

He was out of doors and running toward the timber at the top of his speed.

The redcoats and Sambo were soon in the cellar.

They looked about them.

The cellar was quite a large one, but it was practically empty.

There were a few small boxes scattered about, but nothing behind which a man could hide himself.

"He's not here!" cried General Cornwallis.

"He's gone out that way," said the officer with the candle.

He pointed toward the door at one side of the cellar. A rush was made for the door.

The door came open readily when they lifted the latch. The officers rushed up the steps and were out of doors.

They looked all around them with eager eyes.

In no direction could they see anything of the fugitive.

"He has escaped!" cried General Cornwallis, in a tone of anger and vexation.

"He kain't git erway, massa," said Sambo.

"What will hinder him?" angrily.

"De houn's, massa."

General Cornwallis gave a start.

"What hounds?" he asked.

"De bloodhoun's, massa; we'se got two bloodhoun's heah severe for me."

dat kin foller him ez eezy ez fallin' off er log. Put den dogs on his track an' he kain't git erway, no way yo kin fix et."

"Quick, get the hounds!" cried General Cornwallis. "We'll run that spy to earth and have him swinging at the end of a stout rope before morning, or we'll know the reason why!"

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK AND THE BLOODHOUNDS.

The negro gave utterance to a chuckle, and hastened away toward what looked to be a small smoke-house, which was, in reality, a large dog-kennel.

"Hi, now, I'll bet I done git even wid dat fellah fo kickin' me in de stummick!" the negro muttered, as he entered the kennel. "Dese heah houn's'll ketch him an eat him up shuah!"

A few moments later the negro was back to where the officers stood.

With him were a couple of ferocious-looking bloodhounds.

Around the neck of each dog was a stout leather collar to which the negro held.

"Good!" cried General Cornwallis. "Go out to one side a few yards and then go around in a semi-circle. As soon as the dogs strike the trail of the spy, let them go."

"All right, massa."

The negro did as he had been ordered to do.

When the dogs reached a point almost straight from where the redcoats stood, they uttered a loud bay in unison and leaped eagerly forward.

The negro let go his hold on their collars.

Away went the dogs, in long, swift bounds, baying savagely as they went.

"Dey's done got de scent, massa. I pities dat fellah now, I does."

"I'd rather hang him," said General Cornwallis; "but it really doesn't matter. The dogs might as well eat him just so an end is put to the cursed spy, is all we care for."

"That is the main thing, your excellency," said one of the officers. "Perhaps we may be able to be in at the death."

"You four younger men may follow the hounds if you like," said General Cornwallis, "I do not think I shall make the attempt. The exercise would be altogether too

"Very well, your excellency; we will follow, and if by any chance the spy should succeed in escaping death by the dogs, we will see what we can do toward finishing him."

"Very good, Major Ferguson; don't let the spy escape."

General Cornwallis made his way around to the front door of the house and entered, while the four officers and the big negro followed on the trail of the hounds.

Let us return to Dick.

As may be supposed, he had gotten out of the house as quickly as possible.

He made his escape by the same route he had used in entering, and the instant he reached the top of the cellar-way stairs, he sped away toward the timber at his best speed.

He reached the edge of the timber and disappeared within it a moment before the redcoats reached the outer air.

"I'm all right now, I guess," thought Dick, with a feeling of satisfaction.

And Dick really thought that he was perfectly safe.

He had made his escape from the house and had succeeded in reaching the timber a quarter of a mile distant before his enemies reached the outer air.

Why, then, should he not consider himself safe.

Dick would not have been afraid of being captured even though a regiment were on his track.

He slackened his pace to a walk.

There was no need of hurry, he thought.

There was not the least danger, so he might as well take it easy.

This was the way he looked at it.

He felt very well satisfied with the evening's work.

He had acquired some valuable information.

True, he would have preferred not to have been interrupted in his spy work, but he was thankful that he had heard as much as he had.

Then a laugh escaped him as he thought of the manner in which he had brought about the discomfiture of the big negro.

"I guess that black fellow will have a sore feeling in the region of his chest for a few days," the youth said to himself.

At this instant a sound broke the stillness of the night air, causing Dick to stop suddenly and give utterance to a startled exclamation.

The sound in question was the baying of the bloodhounds.

"Hounds!" the youth exclaimed. "Bloodhounds, undoubtedly. Great guns! can it be possible that they have hounds upon my track!"

Again the baying of the hounds.

This time it was closer than before.

"The brutes are on my trail, without a doubt!" murmured Dick. "Jove! but I must get away from here, and that in a hurry."

Dick did not know much about bloodhounds.

His knowledge regarding them was limited to what he had read and heard others say.

All the stories that he had ever heard or read had tended to impress him with the idea that a genuine bloodhound was almost as dangerous as a Bengal tiger.

He had heard, also, that it was almost an impossibility to throw bloodhounds off the track.

Dick decided to try it, however.

He bounded away through the timber with all possible speed.

This was not as fast as he would have liked to have gone, however.

It was quite dark in the timber, and he had to exercise care to keep from running against a tree and injuring himself.

Every few moments the terrible baying sound came to his ears.

Dick listened, eagerly and carefully.

He wished to determine whether or not the hounds were gaining on him.

He soon discovered that they were.

Each time the baying sound came to his ears it sounded closer.

"I fear it will be impossible for me to get away from them," thought Dick. "The brutes can pick up the trail faster than I can make it. They can see better than I can and do not have to hold back in order to avoid running against trees."

When Dick had his struggle with the redcoat bully that evening he had not seemed to be armed.

He had been, however.

Well around under the skirt of his coat a couple of pistols were concealed.

They were there now, but Dick felt with his hands to make sure.

"There are two shots there," the youth thought. "I wonder how many dogs there are. If there are but two, I may be able to kill them; but if there should happen to be more than two, it is hard telling how the affair will turn out."

"Well, I'll make a desperate fight for my life."

Dick kept up his flight.

He wished to get as far away from Camden as possible before being overtaken by the bloodhounds.

Onward he plunged.

After him came the eager brutes.

The louder sounded the baying.

The hounds were coming closer.

Dick set his teeth together, grimly.

He hastened onward.

Louder and closer sounded the baying of the hounds.

"They're not far behind," panted Dick; "I'll have to stop and make a stand for my life pretty soon."

The pace at which Dick had been going through the timber and underbrush was telling on him.

He was not exhausted, but he was becoming very tired.

Suddenly Dick came to an opening in the timber.

It was a glade perhaps fifty yards wide.

An exclamation of satisfaction escaped Dick's lips.

"I will cross to the other side and there stop and make my stand," the youth said to himself. "The moon shining down into the glade makes it light enough so that I will be able to see the dogs. I will know how many there are of them and will have an opportunity to take aim at them before firing."

Reaching the farther side of the opening, Dick paused.

He glanced about him and quickly selecting a tree which could be climbed at an instant's notice, he took up his position at its foot.

Drawing his pistols, Dick examined them as well as he could by moonlight.

He wished to see if they were in good working order.

His life might depend upon whether or not this was the case.

So far as he could see they were all right.

Again the baying of the bloodhounds sounded upon the night air.

Dick fixed his eyes upon the spot at the opposite side of the glade, where he was sure the bloodhounds would appear.

"They are almost here," he murmured. "Now, Dick, my boy, you will have to look out for yourself; this is a new experience for you."

When Dick had paused he had been very tired and was panting like a good fellow, but now, thanks to the fact that he was in such splendid physical condition, his breathing was almost normal.

A few moments only had been needed to enable him to recover his wind.

And now, as he stood there with his back against the tree, holding the cocked pistols in his hand, his nerves were as steady as a rock.

Suddenly an exclamation escaped his lips.

"Ah, there they come!"

Out from the timber at the opposite side of the glade bounded two bloodhounds.

They were great, fierce-looking brutes, and as they came bounding across the open space, their massive jaws extended, their breasts flecked with foam, Dick could not help acknowledging to himself that it had been a long time since he had seen a more terrifying sight.

The brave "Liberty Boy" had a stout heart, however. His nerves were like steel.

Dick did not know the meaning of the word "fear."

Mere appearances, no matter how threatening, were not sufficient to daunt him.

As the hounds came onward, Dick watched them carefully and calmly.

Coolly he speculated upon what would be the best spot to place a bullet in order to do the most damage.

He decided that a bullet placed in the broad breasts of the hounds, just at the point where neck and breast meet, ought to be sufficient to stop the rush of even such fierce brutes as these evidently were.

Dick waited until the savage animals were two-thirds of the way across the open space.

One of the hounds was perhaps two yards in advance of the other.

Both dogs presented a bad enough appearance, but the one in advance was the worse looking of the two.

Raising the pistol, which he held in his right hand, Dick took careful aim.

The brute was within thirty feet when Dick pulled the trigger.

Crack!

The pistol shot rang out loudly on the still, night air, awaking the echoes for a mile around.

A wild, shrieking howl came close upon the heels of the shot.

The bloodhound was hard hit.

One leap he took after the bullet struck him, and then down upon the ground he went, and the manner in which he kicked and struggled proved that he had received his death-wound.

The redcoats, half a mile away, heard the shot and knew what it meant.

"The dogs have run the spy down," one cried, "and he is shooting at them."

"And, judging by the sound of that howl," said another, "he must have hit one of them, too."

The others agreed that this was so.

The instant Dick fired the shot he dropped the pistol to the ground and took the other in his right hand.

"I have fixed one of those brutes so that he won't be

able to do me any harm!" he murmured, grimly. "Now for the other!"

Dick raised the pistol and took careful aim at the broad breast of the remaining bloodhound.

The dog was within twenty feet of Dick when he pulled the trigger.

Crack!

Again a pistol shot awoke the night echoes.

Again a wild, blood-curdling howl went up.

Dick's bullet had gone straight to the mark.

The bloodhound was hard hit.

Its forelegs seemed to double under it.

It pitched forward on its head and rolled over and over, coming to a stop almost at Dick's feet.

The animal was past doing any harm, however.

A few kicks, an expiring groan, and all was over.

Dick stooped and picked up his other pistol.

"Those were a couple of pretty good shots, if I do say it," remarked Dick, quietly.

Then he calmly proceeded to recharge the pistols.

This did not take him long.

As he finished, and thrust the pistols in his belt, Dick heard the sounds of excited voices.

"Ah! the enemy is at hand," he said, under his breath.

"Well, let them come. I have killed the hounds and I am not afraid of their owners catching me."

With these words, Dick plunged into the timber, quickly disappearing from sight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS'" PLOT.

"See, Dick, yonder come three British officers!"

"Jove! you're right, Bob; if we work it right we may be able to capture them."

It was the afternoon of the day following the night on which Dick had his adventures in Camden.

The youth, after killing the bloodhounds, had experienced no difficulty in escaping from the officers.

He had reached the camp of the "Liberty Boys" in safety, and, after telling his comrades the story of his adventures, he attended to stationing the pickets, and then all lay down and went to sleep.

Next morning they talked the matter over, and, desiring to keep as close a watch as possible on the redcoats, the "Liberty Boys" had moved down to within about three-quarters of a mile of Camden.

That afternoon, as Dick and Bob stood in the edge of the timber bordering the road, three British officers suddenly came in sight around a bend in the road.

Bob had been the first to notice them, and had uttered the exclamation given at the head of this chapter.

"I think we may be able to capture them, Dick," said Bob, in reply to Dick's last remark; "but how are you going to go about it?"

"I'll tell you, we'll have the boys come out here and take up a position in the timber at the side of the road, while you and I, who are dressed like typical country boys of this region, will go up the road a short distance and then step out of the timber into the road and come walking down so as to meet the British officers; we will meet them at just about this spot, and will engage them in conversation. While this is going on the boys can suddenly appear and force the redcoats to surrender."

"A good scheme. Come, let's get the boys."

The youths hastened back into the timber.

It was only a short distance to the camp.

They reached there quickly and told the "Liberty Boys" what they wished them to do.

The youths leaped to their feet, seized their weapons and hastened over toward the road.

Dick and Bob hastened away, also.

They went through the timber in a diagonal direction, and reached the road a hundred yards farther up.

Without hesitation, they stepped out into the road and walked slowly down toward the approaching redcoats.

Suddenly the officers paused.

"They have seen us, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, so they have."

"I hope they won't get scared out and go back."

"Oh, I guess there's no danger of that; there are three of them and only two of us."

"And those two, a couple of green-looking country gawks, eh, Dick?" with a chuckle.

"Right, Bob; I guess they won't be afraid of us."

Dick's judgment was correct.

After hesitating for a few moments, and talking among themselves, the British officers came on.

Dick and Bob were watching the redcoats, closely, without seeming to do so, and they saw that the redcoats were watching them closely.

"They seem to be a little bit suspicious of us, Dick," said Bob, in a low tone.

"You're right, Bob; I don't know that it makes much difference, however, they are already almost in the trap, and once in it they will be unable to get out of it."

"That's right; their suspicions won't help them then."

The youths said no more, as they were within a few yards of the redcoats and their words would be apt to be overheard.

The British officers eyed the youths closely as the two parties drew close together, and Dick, who was watching them just as closely, saw one of the redcoats give a start.

The youth was quick-witted and shrewd.

He knew what the start meant.

The officer had recognized him as being the country youth who had entered Camden the evening before and created such a sensation by thrashing one of the leading bullies of the British army and afterward seriously wounding him in a duel.

"Doubtless the idea has got abroad in Camden that I am the spy who was discovered in General Cornwallis' headquarters last night," thought Dick; "and in that case these fellows will undoubtedly try to make me a prisoner. Very well, let them try it. I judge we will be able to give them a little surprise."

It turned out as Dick thought it would.

"You are our prisoners!" said the British officer whom Dick had noticed give a start of surprise.

As he spoke, the three drew their pistols.

Dick and Bob manifested no alarm.

"You are mistaken," said Dick, calmly. "See, you are surrounded by my 'Liberty Boys'!"

As Dick spoke, he waved his hand.

As he did so, up from behind the bushes growing along the edge of the timber at the roadside rose the "Liberty Boys" as one man.

A hundred muskets threatened the startled redcoats.

"Trapped!" cried one.

"Just so," replied Dick, grimly. "You are our prisoners. Your weapons, please!"

The British officers gave utterance to a groan in unison. They realized that it would be madness to show fight.

It would be equally absurd for them to try to make their escape.

They would be shot down before they could go ten feet.

They handed their weapons to Dick and Bob, with a very ill grace, however.

"You cursed rebel spy!" grated one, glaring fiercely at Dick. "You will be sorry for this!"

"Do you think so?"

Dick's tone and air were cool and unconcerned.

"I know so!" fiercely.

"I am not alarmed."

"You will be when our brave men get after you for this outrage."

Dick smiled.

"We'll risk it," he said, quietly.

Then he motioned toward the timber.

"Kindly come with me," he said; "I suppose there's no use to warn you that if you attempt to escape you will be shot down without mercy."

"Lead on, we will follow," was the reply. "We understand the uselessness of trying either to resist or to escape at the present time."

Dick and Bob led the way, the three officers following, and behind them came the "Liberty Boys."

The camp was soon reached.

Dick ordered that the prisoners' hands should be tied behind their backs and the prisoners themselves tied to trees, and when this had been done, Dick took Bob off to one side.

"I wish to have a little talk with you," he said.

"What is it, Dick?"

"Well, in the first place, in taking these officers prisoners, we have really got an elephant on our hands."

"That's true," agreed Bob; "whenever we want to move quickly they will be in our way."

"Just so; and I'll tell you what I have made up mind to do."

"What?"

"I am going to set them free and let them go back to Camden."

Bob looked surprised.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, "won't that be dangerous? They'll send a detachment of soldiers after us, won't they?"

Dick smiled.

"Without a doubt," he said; "but that will be just what we want."

Again Bob looked surprised.

"I don't understand," he said; "they'll send a regiment after us, a strong enough force to eat us up, and we will have to get out of this in a hurry."

"Exactly; and that is what I want them to do." and

"Eh?"

Bob was astonished.

"Yes, that is just what I want them to do, Bob. Let them send the regiment; we will lead it a merry chase."

Bob looked doubtful.

He did not seem to be exactly pleased with the prospect.

"I don't just fancy this thing of allowing ourselves to be chased by a superior force of redcoats, Dick," he said. "We 'Liberty Boys,' as you know, would rather fight than run, any time."

"I know that, Bob, but I guess we can stand it to run for a while, if by so doing we can win in the end."

"But how will it be possible for us to win?"

"I'll tell you, Bob: I understand that up in the mountains, in the vicinity of Gilberttown, are several parties of patriots. These parties are made up of hardy mountain men, and are under the command of such brave and daring men as Isaac Shelby, John Sevier, Charles McDowell and James Williams. If we can lead the redcoats up into that region, and can get word to the leaders of those patriot bands, it will result, in all probability, in our enemies being captured or annihilated; that would be doing good work, would it not?"

"Indeed it would, Dick!" cried Bob, enthusiastically. "Say, that's a regular plot, isn't it? It's a great plot, and I believe it will succeed. I'm for putting it to the test, anyway."

Dick nodded.

There was a satisfied look on his face.

"I thought you would say that, Bob. I believe we will be able to toll them into the trap, all right; it's about the only way we can accomplish anything, anyway, as we one hundred fellows could not hope to fight the whole British army. The best that we can hope to do will be to be instrumental in detaching a portion of the British army and causing it to be captured or annihilated."

"Well, that will be a good deal, Dick, if we only succeed, and I think we can."

"We'll try, at any rate, Bob."

The youths talked the matter over for a few minutes longer and then Dick called all the "Liberty Boys" to the spot. He told them what he purposed doing.

The youths, without a single exception, favored the plan. They said they thought it would succeed.

"Of course, there will be danger in doing this," said Dick, "but I don't think any of you will be for holding back on that account."

"I hardly think so," said Bob, with a grin.

The looks on the faces of the youths was ample proof of this.

These youths had been tried in the fire.

Not one of them had ever been found wanting.

They were, each and every one, as brave as a lion.

They were utterly fearless under any and all circumstances.

When everything had been decided, the youths returned to where the prisoners were.

Dick advanced and faced the prisoners.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we have been talking the mat-

ter over, and we have decided that in capturing you we have made a mistake."

"I thought you would decide thus," said one of the redcoats, in a sneering tone.

"In making prisoners of you," went on Dick, calmly, "we have loaded ourselves down with a burden, and we have decided to get rid of it."

The officers turned pale and looked at each other. The same thought was in the mind of each.

They thought that they were to be murdered in cold blood.

"Surely you would not dare murder us!" cried one of the redcoats. "Should you do so, our brave men would hunt you down and shoot every one of you down like dogs."

"No, we are not going to murder you," said Dick, calmly; "if you knew 'The Liberty Boys of '76' better, however, you would know that we do not hold our hands on account of any fear which we might feel regarding what your men might do to us; if we wished to do it, we would certainly dare do it."

The redcoats looked puzzled.

"Then you are not going to kill us?" he asked. Dick shook his head.

"No," he replied, "we are not going to kill you." The redcoats looked relieved.

"Ah," the spokesman exclaimed, "you are going to go away and leave us here, tied to these trees."

Dick shook his head.

"No," he said, "we are not going to do that."

The redcoat looked puzzled.

"What are you going to do, then?" he asked.

"We are going to set you free and let you return to your friends."

The redcoats looked amazed.

"Going to set us free!" exclaimed the spokesman. Dick nodded.

"Yes," he said, "that is what we are going to do."

Then he drew a knife from his belt, and, stepping forward, cut the bonds of each of the officers in turn.

"There; you are free to go," he said, quietly.

The officers looked around them at the "Liberty Boys" standing near, as if they suspected there was a trick back of the matter.

"Your men are not going to shoot us in the back as we walk away?" queried the redcoat, suspiciously.

Dick's lip curled with scorn.

"We do not do business that way," he said; "you are at liberty to go, and you need not fear that you will sustain any injury at the hands of my 'Liberty Boys.' "

It was plain from the puzzled look on the redcoats' faces that they did not understand the matter at all.

They decided to take advantage of the opportunity given them at once, however.

These youths who called themselves "The Liberty Boys of '76" might change their minds about the matter and decide not to let them go, after all.

"Very well, we will go," said the redcoat who had done most of the talking; "you must not think, however, that because you have been lenient and set us free, that we will feel kindly enough toward you so that we will not try to injure you. Just as soon as we reach camp we will raise a body of men and come after you."

"You are a brave man," said Dick, quietly, "and there is not a man here who thinks the less of you for it; we ask nothing at your hands, nor do we place any restrictions upon you. You are at liberty to raise a body of men and come after us just as soon as you like. 'The Liberty Boys of '76' have always been able to take care of themselves in the past, and I think they will be able to do so in the future."

"Rebels though you are, you are brave and magnanimous," the officer said; "we appreciate your generosity in setting us free, but, as I said before, we will be after you just as quickly as we can. Good-by, and—look out for yourselves!"

"Thank you for the warning," said Dick; "you need not fear but that we will look out for ourselves."

The officers walked quickly away and were soon out of sight.

As soon as they were gone, Dick sent a couple of the youths in the same direction, with instructions to get close enough to Camden so that they would be able to see the British force when it started, whereupon they were to return with the news.

Then Dick gave orders for the youths to get ready, so that they could break camp and get away almost at an instant's notice.

As the British officers walked rapidly down the road toward the town, they discussed the strange affair in which they had figured.

"I don't understand it," said one; "that young fellow seemed to be a bright chap, but at the same time his act in setting us free and allowing us to return to our friends would not indicate that he is particularly brilliant."

"True," said one of the others, "one would think a fellow was lacking somewhat in common sense to do what he has done."

"That's the way I look at it," said the other officer; "we will now be enabled to get after them with a superior

force, and the chances are that we will either kill or capture them."

But the redcoats were yet to learn that "there is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip."

Had they known Dick Slater better, they would have suspected something.

But they did not know much about the brave young captain of the "Liberty Boys," and the result was that they were going to run right into the trap that Dick had set for them.

Dick's plot was a good one and there seemed to be a good chance that it would be successful.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESULT OF THE PLOT.

It was about nine o'clock at night.

In a beautiful little dell in the foothills of the Alleghenies, in the western part of North Carolina, at a point about three miles distant from Gilberttown, a dozen camp-fires were cheerfully burning.

Around these camp-fires, in picturesque groups, were five or six hundred men.

It was certainly a motley looking crowd, the men being dressed for the most part in buckskin leggins and fringed and tasselled hunting shirts; in their hats were sprigs of hemlock.

These men were armed with long knives and rifles, and any one to look at them would be impressed at once with the belief that they were dangerous men.

And such indeed was the case.

These men came from eastern Kentucky and Tennessee, and they had crossed the mountains for the purpose of getting a chance at the redcoats who had dealt the patriot army, under General Gates, such a deadly blow at Camden a month before.

As these men sat there talking and laughing, they were suddenly surprised by the appearance of a stranger in their midst.

This stranger was a youth of perhaps nineteen years of age, a handsome, manly looking young fellow, and of calm and fearless mien.

The mountain men gazed at the newcomer in astonishment.

Before they could say anything, the youth spoke.

"Who is your commander?" he asked.

"Ike Shelby, stranger," replied one of the mountain men; "thar he is, over yonder, ef ye wants ter see him;" and he pointed toward a man of perhaps fifty years of age, seated at a camp-fire a short distance away.

"Thank you," said the youth, and walking over to the camp-fire he confronted the man who had been pointed out to him.

"Are you Isaac Shelby?" asked the youth, in a respectful tone.

"That is my name, sir," replied the man, gazing at the youth keenly and searchingly. "And, if I may ask, who are you?"

"My name is Dick Slater," was the quiet reply.

The man gave a start.

He looked at Dick, eagerly.

"Can it be possible!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that you are the Dick Slater who, during the past four years, has made such a reputation as a patriot officer and a spy?"

"I am Dick Slater," was the modest reply; "and as captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' and as a spy under the orders of General Washington, I have done all that lay within my power to aid the great cause of Liberty."

Isaac Shelby leaped to his feet and extended his hand.

"I have heard of you often, Dick Slater," he said, "and I am proud to meet you; but how happens it that you are away down here in this part of the country?"

"General Washington sent me down here," the youth replied, as he shook the hand of the man.

"The commander-in-chief sent you down here?"

"He did; or, rather, he gave me permission to bring my 'Liberty Boys' and come. I wished to see if I could not be of some assistance in getting the patriot army together again."

"Ah, I see! And your 'Liberty Boys,' where are they?"

"They are in camp a mile from here; I saw the light of your camp-fires and came over to investigate. I was in hopes that I would find a patriot force here, as there is work for such a force to do."

"Ah!" exclaimed Shelby, his eyes glowing, eagerly. "What is the work?"

"I will tell you," said Dick, and then he went ahead and detailed how himself and "Liberty Boys" had tolled a party of redcoats from Camden clear up into this region.

"The party consists of about twelve hundred men in all," Dick explained; "of these, one thousand are Tories, while two hundred are light infantry from the ranks of the British. This force is under the command of a major by the name of Ferguson, one of Cornwallis' best partisan officers."

Isaac Shelby had listened to Dick's words with eager interest.

"And so you led this party up here on purpose to get them into a trap, did you?" he exclaimed. "Well, I must say that you have done a good thing, and I think we will be able to capture or annihilate the entire British force."

Dick glanced around him.

"You have no more than five or six hundred men," he said; "do you think we can accomplish this with such a small force as compared to the British?"

Isaac Shelby smiled.

"By noon to-morrow I can have more than two thousand men here," he declared. "Within a few miles of us there are four parties like my own. I will send messengers to them at once and have them come immediately; then when they get here we will surround this party of redcoats and gradually close in on them and crush them."

"That is a good plan," said Dick; "send the messengers at once."

"I will do so."

Isaac Shelby called the names of four men and instantly the four men whose names had been called leaped to their feet and approached.

Their commander told them what he wished them to do.

The men listened without a word, and when they had heard all, they nodded their heads, seized their rifles and left the camp, each going in a different direction.

"If we don't have a force of close to three thousand men here by ten o'clock to-morrow, then I shall miss my guess," said Isaac Shelby.

"I hope that such will be the case," said Dick.

"Oh, I would wager my life on it," said the man.

Dick remained in the camp of the mountain men perhaps half an hour longer.

They talked the matter over in all its details and laid their plans.

When they had come to a perfect understanding regarding what was to be done, Dick took his departure and made his way back to the camp of the "Liberty Boys."

When he told them how affairs stood, they were delighted.

"Good!" cried Bob; "your plot is going to turn out all right, after all, Dick."

"Yes, I rather think the plan is going to be a success."

Next morning the "Liberty Boys" waited till the pursuing redcoats were almost upon them before breaking camp and moving onward.

This was at about half-past nine o'clock.

For the first time since the chase had been going on the "Liberty Boys" showed a disposition to be stubborn.

Whenever they came to a spot that offered them anything in the way of a vantage ground, they stopped and fired upon their pursuers.

Dick had a double purpose in view in doing this.

One was to retard the progress of the redcoats as much as possible; the other was to apprise Shelby and the other forces of mountain men of the location of the enemy.

The sound of the firing would be sufficient for this purpose.

Of course, the redcoats did not at first suspect anything.

They thought the "Liberty Boys" were doing this more in a spirit of bravado than otherwise.

They knew that there were only a hundred of the youths, and the idea of their showing fight against twelve hundred was absurd.

Major Ferguson was a shrewd fellow, however, and he had been careful enough to send out scouts in every direction.

A little before noon these scouts began coming in and reporting the presence of considerable forces of armed men in the immediate vicinity.

The British commander took alarm at once.

A serious look came upon his face.

"I think I begin to see the tail of a large-sized rat," he said, decidedly. "I believe that party of rascally youths, who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' have led us into a trap."

He gave the order at once for his men to start on the back track.

He sent his scouts out again with instructions to watch these parties of armed men closely and to come back and report at frequent intervals.

The scouts obeyed.

Some of them were soon back.

They reported that the armed men, who, judging by their dress, were mountaineers, were closing in; and they gave it as their belief that these men were trying to surround the British force.

This was Ferguson's own idea, and he gave the command for his men to retreat on the double-quick.

His men moved rapidly, but so did the mountain men.

In fact, the mountain men moved even more swiftly than the redcoats.

They were seasoned, hardy men, tough, wiry, strong of wind and were, moreover, used to walking over rough, mountainous country.

The British commander saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from that part of the country without a fight, and he began to look around for a suitable place to make a stand.

His scouts had told him that his party was outnumbered at least two to one, and he knew that to make an even thing of it he would have to find a place where the strength of position would make up for the lack of force.

He had kept his men on the move all the afternoon and during the night, up till nearly midnight, at which time they reached a high ridge about half a mile long and seventeen hundred feet in height.

This ridge was situated just on the border line between North and South Carolina, and was known, locally, as "King's Mountain."

Major Ferguson seized upon this spot as being the place for him to make his stand.

His men were almost exhausted, anyway, and would have to stop soon.

He gave the order and the tired soldiers climbed slowly upward and finally reached the top of the ridge.

They drew long sighs of relief and sank down, anxious to secure the rest of which they stood in such need.

When the sun rose next morning, and Major Ferguson had a chance to look about him, he was delighted.

"Well, boys," he said, exultantly, "here is a place from which ten thousand rebels could not drive us."

Major Ferguson, however, did not know with whom he was dealing.

These men whom he, in scorn, had referred to as "dirty mongrels," were descended from Scottish Covenanters, French Huguenots and English sea-rovers.

They were men who did not know the meaning of the word "fear."

They were men, moreover, who were used to climbing mountains and who were the deadliest of deadshots.

By three o'clock that afternoon the "Liberty Boys" and mountain men were ready to storm the redcoats' position.

There was a precipice on the north side of the mountain.

It was so steep that the redcoats could not possibly descend without falling to their death.

This, of course, cut off all retreat in that direction, and left but three sides for the patriot forces to have to look after.

Divided into three parties of equal size, the patriots began the ascent, simultaneously.

As soon as the force which came up directly in front got up close to the crest of the mountain, the redcoats opened fire.

The patriots, old mountain men and used to this sort of thing, fell apart instantly, and, sheltering themselves behind trees and stones, returned the fire with deadly effect.

They crept closer and closer, firing steadily and suffering but very little injury themselves.

Seeing that they could not stop them in this way, the redcoats charged down upon the patriots with bayonets.

The mountain men fell back, and, as they did so, the party on the right opened fire on the British and did such terrible execution that the redcoats turned, furiously, to meet their new assailants.

As they did so they received a volley in their backs from the left division.

At the same time the division at the centre rallied promptly and attacked the redcoats on what was now their flank.

The redcoats, now desperate and frightened, fired wildly, doing but little damage.

The patriots, however, now sure that they had their enemies in their power, climbed steadily onward toward the summit, firing with such coolness and deliberation that nearly every bullet found a resting place in the body of a British soldier.

Just as the patriots reached the top of the mountain, a bullet struck the gallant Ferguson in the breast and he fell from his magnificent white charger, dead, before he struck the ground.

The horse, being wild with fright, leaped down the mountainside to its death.

The redcoats instantly surrendered, and as soon as the white flag was raised, the patriots ceased firing.

Of Ferguson's force, which had numbered 1,125 men, 385 were killed or wounded, 20 were missing and the remainder, 716, surrendered. Of the patriots, only 28 were killed and 60 wounded.

This was what resulted from "THE LIBERTY BOYS' PLOT."

Their plan had won.

THE END.

The next number (39) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' GREAT HAUL; OR, TAKING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT," by Harry Moore.

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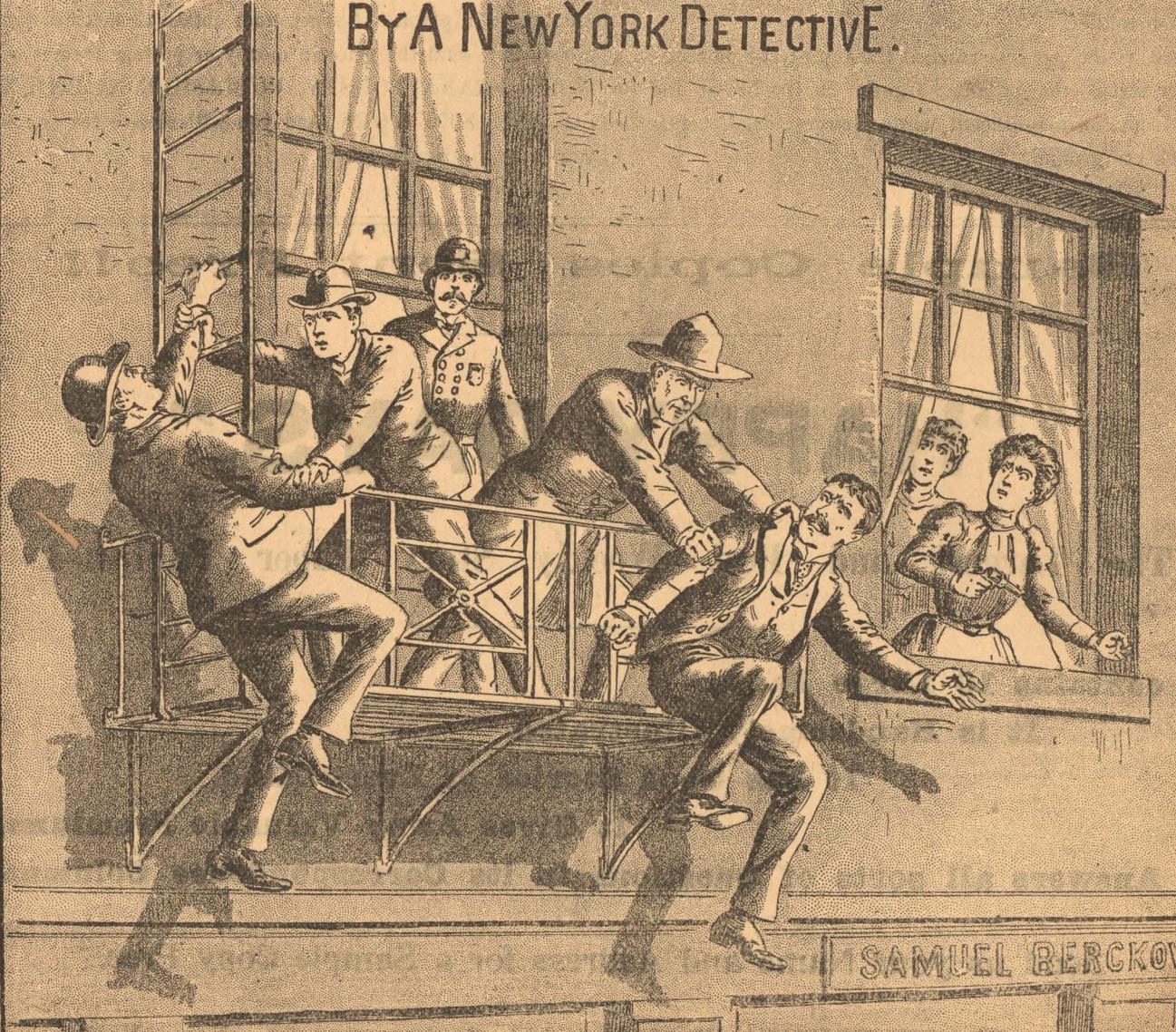
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